

Code 614.4 Biospheric Sciences Branch Seminar

Tuesday, August 14, 2007
Building 33, Room E125
11:00-12:00 AM

Title: Integrating Geospatial Technologies and Social Science: *Challenges and Opportunities*

Speaker: Dr. Brent McCusker, Ass't Professor of Geography, Dep't of Geology and Geography, West Virginia University.

Abstract: Understanding complex human-environment systems has gained the attention of scholars and the public alike in the past decade as the effects of climate change are anticipated to be wide and significant. Social scientists have been paying increasing attention to technologies that can help understand change amongst human populations. Remote sensing and GIS are two such technologies that can help scientists monitor and predict changes in the environment and the impact on society. This seminar will focus on the intersection of geographic technology and human ecology as a technique for monitoring and predicting change in coupled human-environment systems from the perspective of a social scientist working in southern Africa. The variety of techniques for such integrative work will be detailed, but also the possibility for oversimplifications and data-driven research will be addressed.

Short Bio: Dr. Brent McCusker (Ph.D., 2001, Michigan State) is an assistant professor of Development Geography in the Department of Geology and Geography, West Virginia University. His specialties include development theory, land use change and livelihood systems with a regional focus in southern Africa. He has held numerous grants, including a NASA Earth System Science Fellowship and NSF Doctoral Dissertation Award, and is active in the geography community, including participation at regional and national meetings of the Association of American Geographers and is an officer of the Southeast Division of AAG. Recent research projects include building urban indicators using GIS in Beira, Mozambique and comparing uneven regional development in West Virginia, South Africa, and Mozambique. He currently is conducting NSF funded research on land use and livelihood relationships in Malawi. He maintains strong linkages with southern African universities including the University of Malawi, the Catholic University of Mozambique, University of Limpopo (South Africa) and the University of Pretoria (South Africa) and teaches a variety of courses, both in the US and South Africa.

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